

MINNESOTA CULTIVATED WildRice COUNCIL

4630 Churchill Street, #1, St. Paul, MN 55126 • Phone: 651.638.1955 • Fax: 651.638.0756 • wr@mnwildrice.org • www.mnwildrice.org

FOOD EDITORS RELEASE

Contact: Beth C. W. Nelson, President
Chelsea Russell, Communication Director

WILD RICE QUICHE LANDS COOK IN TOP TEN OF WORLD FOOD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Home cook Shannon Kohn loves going to the grocery store just to look at different ingredients; she also finds prepping food "cathartic." She prefers not to let anyone help in her kitchen because she loves all the little chores that go into creating a meal people will enjoy.

Even while competing in this past fall's World Food Championships, she made the decision to cook alone while other competitors had teams of people to assist them. Although admittedly stressed, Kohn came away with second place going into the Top Ten Competition of the Bacon World Championship. Her version of the classic Quiche Lorraine – a crustless buttermilk custard quiche filled with wild rice, dried cherries, smoked Gruyere cheese, sweet onion, and bacon topped with a savory-sweet bacon-pecan streusel – brought her a score of 96.25 out of 100. Word got back to Kohn that one judge claimed, "the quiche was the best thing he ate all week."



Shannon Kohn

Kohn, from Simpsonville, SC, was awarded a golden ticket to WFC by the Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council after competing in its annual "Get Wild with Wild Rice" contest. "I am so thankful (to the Council) for that opportunity and was really happy I could place Top Ten with the wild rice quiche. I am a big fan of wild rice," she says.

Placing in WFC's Top Ten is a big deal; it means winners may automatically compete in the same category the next year. Chefs, restaurateurs, and cooks from around the world compete just to get into one of the many championships. In opening rounds, they must provide two original recipes within a two-hour time period. Kohn, in the Bacon World Championship, scored well with her signature bacon dish consisting of a cornbread whoopie cake topped with a bacon-peanut butter caramel sauce. But she scored even higher with the wild rice quiche.

"I knew it was a risk to do a crustless quiche, but I felt like the wild rice and a crust would compete with each other," she says. Instead of heavy cream, she opted for a buttermilk custard and filled it with wild rice, smoked Gruyere cheese, sweet onion, and bacon. "Then I decided to flip it upside down and put the crust on top with a bacon-pecan streusel. But it was still missing something. At the grocery store, going up and down the aisles, I saw dried cherries." She coarsely chopped the cherries, added them to the custard, and knew she was ready to compete.

The WFC was "one of the most stressful competitive situations I have been in," says Kohn. From 2004 to 2008, she was a contender in events including three Pillsbury Bakeoffs before taking a break that lasted more than a decade. Missing the creative outlet that competitive cooking offered, Kohn decided to enter the 2017 "Get Wild with Wild Rice" contest that led to her entry into the WFC.

But the opening round was challenging from the get-go. She lost precious set-up time at her assigned kitchen when she was asked to relocate to another because of an electrical problem. Then, as her quiches were halfway through baking, she noticed the oven had stopped heating due to a small technical issue.

“One good thing that happened: A team from Canada was across from my station, and their oven was already preheated. They offered to let me put my quiches in, and, in the end, they helped save them.” As she was plating the individual quiches, however, she was so nervous she dropped one. “I think I made it to the judges’ table with 30 seconds to spare.”

As Top Ten winners were announced, Kohn said to her son, Tanner, who made the trip with her, “I want to go back to the hotel. It was an awesome experience, but I don’t think I can handle not hearing my name called.”

Tanner insisted she wait, since only two more names were yet to be made public. “Then they called my name.” I turned to Tanner, and he said, “Mom, the look on your face is completely priceless.”

Within the Top Ten competition, Kohn’s third recipe, Peachy BBQ Bacon Collards with Mini Cornbread Donuts, placed ninth. “For the final round, I stuck to my Southern roots. I used dried peaches, collard greens, and bacon, cooked them in a peach tea (Lipton tea was the infused ingredient cooks in the Bacon category were required to use) with smoked sea salt, onions, and barbecue sauce.” She added donuts topped with a glaze of peach tea and powdered sugar sprinkled with a bacon, black pepper, and smoked sea salt mixture. “I was proud of it, but, in the end, it didn’t plate well because the collards were very liquidy.” Although disappointed she didn’t place higher, Kohn says the experience has taught her so much that she’ll be prepared for next year’s championships.

One of the first things she’ll consider: asking someone to work with her. “My opening rounds were a little more stressful because I was by myself. Things didn’t go 100% perfect, and I hadn’t planned for that.”

“I definitely will prepare a little better for that final round on the chance that I make it in the Top Ten again,” Kohn adds. “I learned three new recipes wasn’t a requirement, and I assumed that they were. I will know in enough time next year to be able to determine what my game plan will be.” If an opening round recipe scores high, she’ll have a few days between competitions to figure out if she can adapt that dish for the final round.

Kohn and her son had plenty of time to attend other opening round championships, learning new ways to plate foods and seeing how other cooks combined different flavors. Going into the 2018 challenge, she will feel more confident that she understands how the championships work.

“It was an incredible experience and I learned so much.” She credits the Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council’s contest, which requires contestants to use wild rice and at least two other ingredients, with pushing her to “be more creative in how I might combine those different ingredients.” When WFC required Kohn to come up with a team name, she kindly included a nod to her family’s roots in both Savannah, GA, and Charleston, SC, as well as the Wild Rice Council by choosing “Lowcountry Wild Child.”

Her husband, Guy, first pushed Kohn to enter cooking contests and has been a constant encourager. Tanner, also in the culinary field, was great support during the competition, and her daughter, Loftin, cheered her on through social media.

Mini Crustless Wild Rice-Dried Cherry Quiche Lorraine

Credit: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council



MINI CRUSTLESS WILD RICE-DRIED CHERRY QUICHE LORRAINE

Shannon Kohn, Simpsonville, SC

- Non-stick cooking spray
- 12 slices smoked bacon, cooked
- 1½ cups cooked wild rice
- 6 oz shredded, smoked Gruyere cheese
- ½ cup coarsely chopped dried cherries
- ⅓ cup diced sweet onion
- 6 eggs
- ½ cup whole milk buttermilk
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp minced garlic (roasting optional)
- 1 tsp salt, divided
- ½ ground black pepper, divided
- 1 tbsp butter, softened
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 3 tbsp chopped pecans
- ½ tsp smoked paprika

Smoky Dijon Aioli (whisk together; set aside):

- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp minced garlic
- ¼ tsp smoked paprika

Preheat oven to 375°F. Spray wells of non-stick 12-count brownie bar pan with cooking spray. Chop 8 bacon slices; place in a large bowl. Add wild rice, Gruyere, cherries, and onion. Stir to combine; divide mixture in pan wells. In a large bowl, whisk eggs, buttermilk, Dijon, garlic, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Pour evenly over wild rice mixture. Chop remaining bacon; place in a medium bowl. Stir in butter, sugar, pecans, paprika, and remaining salt and pepper to form streusel topping; sprinkle evenly over egg mixture. Bake 25-28 minutes until lightly browned and cooked through. Cool slightly before serving. Top with Aioli. 12 appetizer-sized quiches.

Notes to Editor:

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